**THE CHALLENGES OF WESTERN THOUGHTS IN INDONESIA: A STUDY OF CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC AND OCCIDENTAL STUDIES (CIOS) ROLE**

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# **Abstract:** This research aims to analyze and examine the role of a study centre under the faculty of ushuluddin at the University of Darussalam Gontor (UNIDA) in facing the challenges of western thought in Indonesia. The study centre is the Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (CIOS). It focuses on studying Islam and Occidentalism to respond to the westernization of thought. Therefore, the programs conducted by CIOS are part of the efforts to achieve Islamic civilization. This research applies the qualitative methodology with the case study approach. The data are collected from the primary recourses and secondary resources with the interview. In order to spread the ideas constructed by CIOS, it established some programs such as; (1) seminars and workshops and (2) publications.

Keywords: CIOS, westernisation, orientalism, Indonesia.

***Abstrak:*** *Penelitian ini memiliki tujuan untuk menganalisis serta menguji peran salah satu pusat studi fakultas Ushuluddin Universitas Darussalam (UNIDA) Gontor dalam menghadapi tantangan pemikiran barat di Indonesia. Pusat studi tersebut dikenal dengan nama* Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (*CIOS) yang fokus pada kajian Islam dan oksidentalisme sebagai respon terhadap westernisasi pemikiran oleh orientalis barat. Oleh karena itu, kegiatan yang dilaksanakan oleh CIOS merupakan salah satu upaya untuk mengembalikan peradaban Islam. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui data primer maupun sekunder menggunakan wawancara. Untuk menyebarkan pemikirannya, CIOS melahirkan beberapa program diantaranya; (1) seminar dan diskusi (2) publikasi.*

*Kata kunci: CIOS, oksidentalisme, westernisasi, kaderisasi ulama.*

# **Introduction**

 Indonesia is the largest Muslim country in the world, with various cultures that exist around the community. Islam was spread in the Indonesian archipelago using the acculturation approach by Wali Songo. This approach aims to save the good cultures developed around the society and eliminate the cultures that are not compatible with *sharīʿah*.[[1]](#footnote-1) Islam is a universal and comprehensive religion that promotes peace and harmony among the ummah. Islam has contributed to the various aspects of Indonesia such as political, social, and educational aspects. In the political aspect, some Islamic organisations have been actively involved in preparing for the Independence Day of Indonesia. In the social aspect, Islam highly practiced the concept of tolerance that created harmony among the society. In the educational aspect, many Islamic educational institutions called *madrasah* and *pesantren* have prioritized the noble character *(al-akhlāq al-karīmah)* as human values.

 In the post-independence era, Islam continuously developed in Indonesia. Islamic educational system has spread along with the establishment of *pesantren* in every part of Indonesia. Muslims in Indonesia are classified into two, traditionalists and modernists. Muslim traditionalists are those who strictly followed the local Muslim scholars as their religious teachers in *pesantren* to grasp the meaning of Islam. In contrast, Muslim modernists are those who understand the concept of *Tawhīd* and practice the modern style of learning,[[2]](#footnote-2) and both contributed to the growth of Islam in Indonesia. However, there are some challenges that Muslims in Indonesia currently face since the crisis of western globalisation entered the country easily as part of modernisation. The latest generation started to leave *shariʿah* as the concept of life and prefer to adopt western ideologies such as hedonism, individualism, and feminism.

 For this reason, globalization and westernization get more attention from Muslim scholars in Indonesia because the western ideology will harm the Muslims’ worldviews and corrupt their īmān. Promoting awareness of this issue is done through some organizations, movements, and studies. One of the study centers contributing to overcoming this issue is the center for Islamic and occidental studies (CIOS). CIOS is part of the study centers in the University of Darussalam (UNIDA) Gontor under the faculty of Ushuluddin that actively conducted seminars and discussions regarding the issue. It has also published several books related to the issue. Hence, this article aims to analyze the role of CIOS in facing the challenge of western thought in Indonesia.

**Research Methodology**

This research adopts the qualitative methodology with the library research approach. Data are collected from books, journals, and media related to the topic. This research will first discuss westernization and Occidentalism studies in Indonesia before identifying the roles of CIOS through the conducted programs, seminars, discussions, and publications done by its publisher. In discussing the main idea of the research, the writer uses the books published by CIOS and the website of CIOS as the primary sources. However, other sources will still be used to complete this research's references.

**Results and Discussion**

**Background of Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (CIOS)**

Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (CIOS) is one of the study centres located in the University of Darussalam (UNIDA) Gontor and controlled by the faculty of Ushuluddin.[[3]](#footnote-3) This study centre was firstly initiated by Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi on May 2, 2006/*Jumādā al-Thānī* 1427 H. Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi was the vice-rector IV, he is also a child of the founding father of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam Gontor who finished the doctoral study at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), a branch campus of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). During his study, he learnt from many inspirational scholars, especially the founder of ISTAC, Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Alparslan Acikgenc. Hence, both scholars influenced Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi in constructing his framework and worldview.[[4]](#footnote-4) Therefore, Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi believes that CIOS is one of the implementations of his big goals in spreading the importance of the Islamic worldview and occidental studies to prevent the westernisation of thought. CIOS focuses in studying the important concepts and the contemporary issues in the intellectual tradition of Islamic and western civilisation. The main programs of this study centre is workshop, seminar, intellectual speech, research, discussion and publication.

The inauguration of CIOS’s building was done twice by Ja’far Abdul Salam as a General Secretary of the League of Islamic Universities and Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, Shaykh al-Azhar on the anniversary of the 80th century of Modern Islamic Boarding School Darussalam Gontor.[[5]](#footnote-5) CIOS was established as the study centre of Islam on western thought (Occidentalism) to respond to the western study on Islamic thought (orientalism). Occidentalism discussed western thought from the Islamic perspective and hence, it requires knowledge of the Islamic civilisation. Islam is not only a religion but is also viewed as a civilisation and Western currently against Islam as a civilisation, not a religion. Islamic history recorded that Islam became a new source of ideas for other civilisations such as the Greek East and Latin West and Arabic language as a primary language of the Islamic civilisation.[[6]](#footnote-6) Thus, Islam became the centre of the great civilisation that provided all fields of knowledge such as science, philosophy, and arts.

Facing other civilisations is not a simple thing to implement as it requires the board knowledge in understanding the fundamental concepts of Islam such as *al-Qur’ān, Hadīth, Tafsīr, Uṣul al-Fiqh,* and *ʿAqīdah*. The classical Muslim scholars who mastered the all fundamental concepts of Islam were able to adopt and modify other civilisation’s knowledge by the Islamic framework called Islamisation of knowledge. Unfortunately, the mastership on Islamic fundamental concepts currently decreases in the Islamic intellectual tradition due to the inclusion of western thought. Therefore, the misconceptions regarding Islam arise that cause adoption of western thought uncritically.

# **The Impact of Westernisation and Globalisation in Indonesia**

The term westernization is rooted in the word “westernise”, which, according to the oxford dictionary, means: “to bring ideas or ways of life that are typical of Western Europe and North America to other countries.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Whereas globalisation is rooted in the world “globalise”, which means: “to operate all around the world”. According to Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, westernization and globalisation are defined similarly as the program to make the weak states accept the western values as the stronger state and make them universal values.[[8]](#footnote-8) Thus, westernisation and globalisation are used to transfer western cultures and ideologies.[[9]](#footnote-9) Westernisation first entered Indonesia during the colonialism process within the 19th century because there was direct interaction between the West and Indonesian society.[[10]](#footnote-10) The ideology of liberalism, secularism, pluralism are not innocent intellectual exercises brought by the West, but they are intendedly brought to defeat Islam.[[11]](#footnote-11) Some factors that recently cause a massive spread of westernisation in Indonesia are the development of media, industry, tourism, and communication.[[12]](#footnote-12) Therefore, the technological advancements in Indonesia can contribute to westernisation. However, it does not mean to reject the technological development in Indonesia but this situation urges the understanding and implementation of Islamic worldview to filter everything that comes from the West. There are two important impacts of westernisation in Indonesia that are challenging for Muslims, those are intellectual and political aspects.

## Impact of Westernisation in the Intellectual Aspect

Western paradigm on the truth is relative[[13]](#footnote-13) and is right for all human beings. Hence, it does not involve the existence of God since the human intellect can determine the meaning of the truth itself.[[14]](#footnote-14) Thus, westernisation is called also secularisation of knowledge. Other than that, the western paradigm only accepts the empirical evidence to be identified as knowledge, and the mistreatment towards religious knowledge is its consequence.[[15]](#footnote-15) There are two ideas of thought offered by the west. First, making the existence of humans as the absolute essence that is inspired by the quote “I think therefore I am”. Second, making the senses as the source of knowledge. Thus, both resulted in the indirection change due to failure to reach the absolute truth.[[16]](#footnote-16) According to al-Attas, westernisation makes science seems like a true science but it actually expands the confusion and stimulates the sceptical behaviour of human beings. Hence, they manipulated science by viewing it relatively, showing that they lost the main goals of science.[[17]](#footnote-17) Similarly, Ismail Raji al-Faruqi asserted that science’s success is considered an achievement of empirical thought from religious thought, which caused widespread skepticism in the West.[[18]](#footnote-18)

For this reason, westernisation can cause problematic intellectual that prioritises the human idea as the actual truth, resulting in the domination of lust in self-controlling. It is understood that westernisation cause the loss of adab in acquiring the knowledge as it contradicted the Islamic concepts in identifying the absolute truth. Accordingly, many Muslim scholars considered that Islamic knowledge is similar to Western knowledge due to the claims that western civilisation obtained the knowledge through the Islamic civilisation. They also considered knowledge is free of value. Those considerations will make them unable to classify between western and Islamic knowledge.[[19]](#footnote-19) As a result, Indonesia is coloured by western thoughts such as the idea of religious pluralism, feminism, and hermeneutic technique in interpreting the Quran.

## Impact of Westernisation in Political Aspect

Westernisation has an extensive impact on politics as secularisation which means separation of life including politics from religion. Westernisation was brought during the process of colonialism as a political power to spread Western cultures and ideologies to other states, including Islamic states. Some of its products are the issue of democracy and human rights, polygamy, criminality’s law, and justice.[[20]](#footnote-20) It is understood that a state needs the source of ethics, law, and spirituality, which can only be gained from religion's existence in the political system. Political westernisation considered that political power is based on rational and modern sources of legitimation. Hence, the governmental system built by religious authorization must be rejected.[[21]](#footnote-21) Hamid Fahmy Zarkasy stated that the Islamic law upholds the matter of the ummah in the world and hereafter, material and spiritual and hence, it cannot be compared with the constitution. Therefore, leaving the Islamic lawa under the constitution is ambiguous stratification.[[22]](#footnote-22)

In Indonesia, the political indicator of secularisation is the marginalisation of the Muslim scholars from the political aspect that is manifested in certain forms, symbols, actions, or policies done by the Islamic parties due to political pragmatism. Other than the governmental system, the political secularisation is also done through the supports of a few Muslim scholars by constructing the new idea regarding religion and politics in Indonesia as a plural county. The main goal of this idea is desacralisation, indigenisation, and re-actualisation of Islamic thought, resulting in the change of religious orientation from formalistic to substantial. For example, they have not proposed the formalisation of Islam. Instead, they preferred to use the substantial values of Islam in prioritising nationalism and pluralism such as the concept of justice, equality, brotherhood, and other concepts. While prioritising nationalism and pluralism above religion is also part of secularism.[[23]](#footnote-23) Consequently, westernisation of politics will eliminate the religious aspect in the life of the people and of the nation.

# **Occidentalism studies in Indonesia**

 The term Occidentalism was popularised by a prominent Muslim thinker, Hassan Hanafi and in Indonesia, it was introduced by Burhanuddin Daya.[[24]](#footnote-24) Hassan Hanafi used the term *“istighrāb”* to refer to the occidentalism derived from the word *“gharb”* or the West. According to Daya, occident is derived from Latin, occidere, which means “to go down” which shows the direction of the sunset, also the word “occidens” and “occidentis” which means the sunset but it is a different term with the discourse occidental which means the discussion or appraisal speech or the discussion to understand Islam rationally. Hence, occidentalism defines as the intellectual discourse done by the eastern to study the western civilisation using the east worldview.[[25]](#footnote-25) Hence, occidentalism is considered as the antonym of orientalism but it does not aim to dominate and hegemonise the western as what has been done by the orientalists toward Islam.[[26]](#footnote-26) The implication of orientalism is the establishment of a superior feeling of the western towards the Eastern especially Islam, that is found in orientalists’ works that they complimented themselves and humiliated the Islamic civilisation.[[27]](#footnote-27) In fact, if they use the East worldview in approaching the East, they will find a different result. While occidentalism is expected to prevent the dangers of assuming that western civilisation is the source of knowledge.[[28]](#footnote-28)

Like orientalism, occidenatlism should be discussed deeply by the Islamic worldview, and hence, Muslims will not be amazed at the western civilisation. In contrast, Muslim should be proud of their intellectual tradition, which successfully established the civilisation, and view the western reasonably with criticising its distortion.[[29]](#footnote-29) Hence occidentalism is promoted for facing westernisation. In Indonesia, the topic of occidentalism is massively discussed and studied by Muslim scholars to overcome the issue of orientalism and prevent the corrupted western civilisation. Some organisations involved in this study are INSISTS and its networkings. Also, CIOS is a study centre that focused on the discussion of occidentalism.

# **The Role of Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (CIOS)** **in facing the challenges of western thought**

 Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi believes that the core of civilisation is the knowledge that it is impossible to grow without establishing the creative and active communities in developing the knowledge itself. Hence, in reviving the civilisation must be started from the small community. By this idea, Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi initiated to establish CIOS as the first study centre in the University of Darussalam (UNIDA) Gontor which consists of intellectual activities and communities.[[30]](#footnote-30) The main goal of establishing CIOS is an effort to achieve the Islamic civilisation and to manifest it, there are four important objectives and work programs of CIOS.[[31]](#footnote-31) The objectives of CIOS, are:

* To produce the human resources who have the strong Islamic basics with broad contemporary knowledge.
* To create new concepts and theories in various Islamic disciplines.
* To produce credible researches in Islamic studies, western studies (occidentalism), *ghazw al-fikr*, and civilisation.
* To publish the result of the study about Muslim thinkers and *turāth* and review the contemporary books regarding Islamic Studies.

The work programs of CIOS are:

* To conduct researches in the fields of thought and civilisation, whether Islamic or western
* To conduct workshops, seminars, intellectual speeches, and public lectures.
* To routinely discuss certain issues regarding thought and civilisation, whether Islamic or wester
* To publish books, academic papers as a result of the conducted studies and researches

To implement those objectives and programs, CIOS is structured by five management officers: the director, executive director, workshop and training division, media and publication division, and financial division, which is directly supervised by the dean of Ushuluddin. They are also assisted by staff members from UNIDA students in various program studies. The mentioned objectives and programs are manifested into two important programs: seminar and publication and book publication.

## Seminar and Discussion

CIOS has some routine seminars/workshops and discussions. First, Tuesday forum, a weekly forum about *turāth*, occidentalism, Islamic civilisation. Second, weekly discussion is a discussion forum held twice a week routinely as a collaboration program with the program of Ulama Cadre Program (PKU). Third, a book review seminar discusses certain books published by CIOS or other publishers related to Islamic and occidental studies. Last, the *“sekolah pemikiran Islam”* forum, an annual program that focuses on a current topic or certain issues related to Islamic thought that is held in several sessions for example the discussion on the issue of childfree which is delivered in three sessions from various perspectives with credible speakers. The seminars and workshops are conducted in a hybrid way, offline and online through zoom or YouTube streaming. The Offline one is only open for the internal students of UNIDA. CIOS has several discussion corners for discussion programs such as Hamid’s corner, Nursi’s corner, and junior researchers’ community. Hamid’s corner is a discussion forum that focuses on discussing Hamid Fahmi Zarkasyi’s works that are popular with his concepts on worldview, Islamic philosophy, and civilisation, the concept of *īmān* and *iḥsān.[[32]](#footnote-32)* Another discussion forum is Nursi’s corner which routinely discussed the Said Nursi Badiuzzaman’s works every Wednesday noon. Next, junior researchers’ community consists of students from the various programs to conduct a discussion and publication through the website and wall magazine.

The idea of seminar and discussion actually starts from the consideration that students can widen their thinking framework through reading, listening, and following the intellectual discourses that exist around society. Moreover, Gontor is an educational institution that gives students freedom of thought. Hence, this situation may enable liberalisation to enter their thoughts. Since that, seminars and discussions are routinely been conducted in Gontor.[[33]](#footnote-33) Therefore, seminars and discussions are expected to widen the knowledge regarding Islamic disciplines especially for students who are prepared to be human recourses and Islamic scholars for Indonesia in concerning contemporary issues.

## Publication

Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi stated that there are three important aspects to sustain the Islamic civilization: political stability, economic power, and science. The glory of Islamic civilization is due to the development of science which is supported by political stability and economic power.[[34]](#footnote-34) He tried to point out the importance of science in establishing the Islamic civilisation which is supported by political stability and economic power. However, political ability and economic power are impossible to develop without a true science based on Islamic concepts and worldviews. Therefore, the publication is one way to spread knowledge based on the Islamic worldview.

For this reason, another important project of CIOS is publication. CIOS has at least 16 researchers from prominent Muslim scholars who are actively involved in Islamic organisations such as INSISTS, MIUMI, and both networkings and also lecturers who have mastered the different fields of knowledge in UNIDA. The publication is done through two media, publisher for books publication and website for article publication. There have been at least 18 books authored by various Muslim scholars recorded from 2007 to 2015 discussing contemporary issues.[[35]](#footnote-35) These books are very beneficial for those who study Islamic knowledge and critics towards western ideologies especially for the Ulama Cadre Program (PKU) because CIOS is a vessel for them to deeply learn about Islamic and western civilisation. Other than that, CIOS has a special room for publishers and a library which provides the book collections published by CIOS and other related books. Hence, CIOS is a comfortable building with many intellectual activities that also provide the intellectual needs especially for the internal students of UNIDA.

For the article, the publication is done through the website handled by the staff members. There are more than 20 articles posted on the official website of CIOS (<https://cios.unida.gontor.ac.id/>) which are also accessible for public. The articles were authored by CIOS researchers, junior researchers, students of UNIDA, and the members of Ulama Cadre Program (PKU) in the similar topic on philosophy, Islamic thought, and contemporary issues. The massive publications done by CIOS as a study centre in UNIDA have shown its important role in facing the challenge of western thought. However, CIOS still has a continuous program that need a long journey with more improvements to realise its main important goals because establishing Islamic civilisation in the middle of western challenges is not a simple thing to be done.

# **Conclusion**

 Based on the style of thought, CIOS is highly motivated by Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi’s thought as the founding father of this study centre. Hence, CIOS is one of the realisations of Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi’s concepts of knowledge which is expected to be part of the important efforts in achieving the Islamic civilisation. Indonesia is currently facing the challenges of westernisation which cause some western ideologies that contradicted the Islamic concept enter to the Indonesian young generation’s style of thought. The study of occidentalism can also filter this westernisation. For this reason, it is clear that CIOS plays a significant role in facing the challenges of western thought through the seminars and discussions held routinely for the public and the massive publications through books publisher, and websites. However, CIOS needs to keep updating on the study and researchers through its official websites, and hence, others can benefit from this platform. It is suggested for future researchers to examine the CIOS’s roles in the specific field of knowledge as it has various discussions in different fields of study.

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14. Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi, *Misykat : Refleksi Tentang Islam, Westernisasi & Liberalisasi* (Jakarta: Institute For The Study Of Islamic Thought And Civilizations, 2012), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Harda Armayanto, “Relevansi Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Kontemporer,” *Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Pemikiran Islam* 7, no. 2 (September 2007), 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Andi Wiratama, “Konsep Pendidikan Islam Dan Tantangannya Menurut Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas,” *At-Ta’dib* 5, no. 1 (2009), https://doi.org/DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21111/at-tadib.v5i1.582, 36. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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19. Harda Armayanto, “Relevansi Islamisasi Ilmu Pengetahuan Kontemporer,” 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Hamid Fahmy Zarkasy, *Liberalisasi Pemikiran Islam*, 68-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Mohamad Latief, “Islam Dan Sekularisasi Politik Di Indonesia,” *TSAQAFAH* 13, no. 1 (May 31, 2017): 1, https://doi.org/[10.21111/tsaqafah.v13i1.974](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CASUS%5CDocuments%5CInternship%5CJob%20Desk%5CBOOK%5C10.21111%5Ctsaqafah.v13i1.974), 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Harda Armayanto et al., *Nasihat-Nasihat Peradaban* (Ponorogo: Centre for Islamic and Occidental Studies (CIOS), 2021), 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Mohamad Latief, Op.Cit, 13-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Anton Ismunanto, *Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi*, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Ridho Al-Hamdi, *Epistemologi Oksidentalisme: Membongkar Mitos Superioritas Barat, Membangun Kesetaraan Peradaban* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Samudra Biru (Anggota IKAPI), 2019), 48. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Abdurrahman Kasdi and Umma Farida, “Oksidentalisme Sebagai Pilar Pembaharuan (Telaah Terhadap Pemikiran Hassan Hanafi),” *Fikrah* 1, no. 2 (December 2013), 232 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
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28. Abdurrahman Kasdi and Umma Farida, Op.cit, 245. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Anton Ismunanto, *Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi*, Loc.cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Harda Armayanto et al., *Nasihat-Nasihat Peradaban*, vii-viii. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Anton Ismunanto, *Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi*, 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Harda Armayanto et al., *Nasihat-Nasihat Peradaban,* v. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Anton Ismunanto, *Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi*, 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Harda Armayanto et al., Op.cit, 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Anton Ismunanto, *Hamid Fahmy Zarkasyi*, 201-202 [↑](#footnote-ref-35)